

MELTON CENTRE FOR JEWISH EDUCATION,
THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM

Israel curriculum in
North American
Jewish day schools:
*a study of untapped
transformative
potential*

Report submitted to the
Schusterman and Jim Joseph
Family Foundations as a project
of the iCenter

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1. Introduction and orientation

In our original submission to the Schusterman and Jim Joseph Family Foundations we argued that: "A first step in developing the field of Israel education in Jewish day schools is to catalogue the great quantity of curriculum material already in use in schools." We suggested that "with appropriate analysis, it can be determined what educational purposes are served by this material, and what it would take for schools to adapt these materials to their own purposes."

Behind our proposal lay a recognition that Israel education in North American day schools is a congested and contested field. In this field there are, we estimate, about 300 schools whose values are informed by Zionist commitments. This small but loose network of schools is bombarded by a confusion of initiatives that claim to solve the much discussed disconnect between American Jewish youth and the State of Israel. Most prominent in this bombardment are two products: the Israel experience and the Israel curriculum. One withdraws students from schools in order to provide what for many is a once-in-a-lifetime (and very much unschool like) experience; the other purports to resource the most basic and commonplace component of the school: what children learn in the classroom.

Our focus on curriculum was inspired, then, by a desire to identify and understand the view of Israel that is presented to students in the spaces where they spend the bulk of their time in Jewish schools. We have asked: what are the goals of this curriculum encounter? In what disciplines and subject areas is it anchored? What kinds of pedagogies are utilized? In our work with schools over the last two decades we have often heard complaints that there isn't enough good curriculum for teaching about Israel; with this study we have finally had an opportunity to test this claim's merits.

In this report we describe what we have learned from our research, and where relevant we provide examples from curriculum programs we have analyzed. We describe how most curriculum for teaching about Israel is pedagogically well-conceived in relation

to a number of educational measures; that it tends to be directed at students in high-school rather than elementary-school; and that in large part it is focused on the transmission of content and/or its significance for students' own lives rather than on cultivating students' understanding or behavior. We have found also that in ideological terms the overwhelming majority of programs adopt a classical Zionist orientation (where the State of Israel is seen as the culmination of Jewish history) and/or an Israel engagement orientation (where the State of Israel is understood as a means to identifying with the Jewish people). Remarkably, given how much curriculum exists – we catalogued 72 publicly available items - and how sound its general quality, we found that barely half of North American day schools make use of curriculum produced by outside writers and providers, and that the great majority of school-leaders regard curriculum as having relatively little impact on students' connection to Israel as compared to other vehicles for Israel education.

Our study leads us to believe that Israel curriculum has potential to help transform children's understanding of and relationship to Israel. But to fulfill such potential:

(i) Teachers need help with accessing and evaluating the great quantity of curriculum material already available for teaching about Israel; at present they don't know about the existence of much of this material or what purposes it can serve.

(ii) Carefully conceived professional development must help teachers learn how to adapt curriculum material so that it meets higher order educational goals that go beyond training students to make a case for Israel.

(iii) A special effort must be made to connect at the classroom level what is learned about Israel in the Hebrew language curriculum to other parts of the formal school curriculum, in the sciences as well as the humanities.

(iv) School leaders - at the middle management level, at least - must learn better how to coordinate the study of Israel in the classroom with other Israel education experiences to which students are exposed. In this way, curriculum can become the bedrock for all that students discover about Israel in school.

In the final section of the report, we indicate how the Melton Centre can help bring about these transformative goals.

2. The research process

Our research made use of two primary instruments, one developed specifically for the purposes of this study, and one that utilized opportunities made available by a parallel study we have been conducting for the AVI CHAI Foundation.

i) Identifying and analyzing curriculum

In the first instance, drawing on approaches employed for the study of curriculum in the field of general education, we developed a framework for analyzing Israel education curriculum in relation to a number of dimensions. (See Appendix 1 for a copy of the framework). The framework was employed, first in the analysis of 72 publicly available curriculum produced by commercial publishers or by not-for-profit agencies such as the Jewish Agency, Boards of Jewish Education, and a variety of independent bodies. The framework was then employed to analyze 27 additional samples of curriculum created internally by schools for their own use.

In an important tactical move, we decided to focus our attention as much as possible on curriculum produced during the last 10 years. We figured that material produced before that time would either have become dated in historical or ideological terms, or might no longer be widely available. We generally made an exception to our 10-year rule if a curriculum was still in use and available for purchase, as is the case, for example, with the (1989) Boston Board of Jewish Education's *Israel and the Palestinians: Can Israel Survive as a Jewish and Democratic State?*¹

Significantly, we discovered that a great deal of publicly available curriculum material was not located in either of the world's two largest collections of such materials, at the Jewish Agency's Educational Resource Centre or at the Hebrew University's Education library. Instead, about 30% of the material had to be uncovered or recovered directly from providers following internet searches and

¹ Catalogue item #27

extensive contact with schools. No less significantly, although more than 50 schools promised, in response to a survey we distributed, that they were willing to share with us samples of curriculum they themselves had designed, a much smaller number actually made available suitable materials for analysis. It required many emails and phone calls to schools before we could generate more than twenty such samples, a frustrating but perhaps telling outcome whose significance we will discuss in a later section of the report.

ii) Researching the context in which curriculum is employed

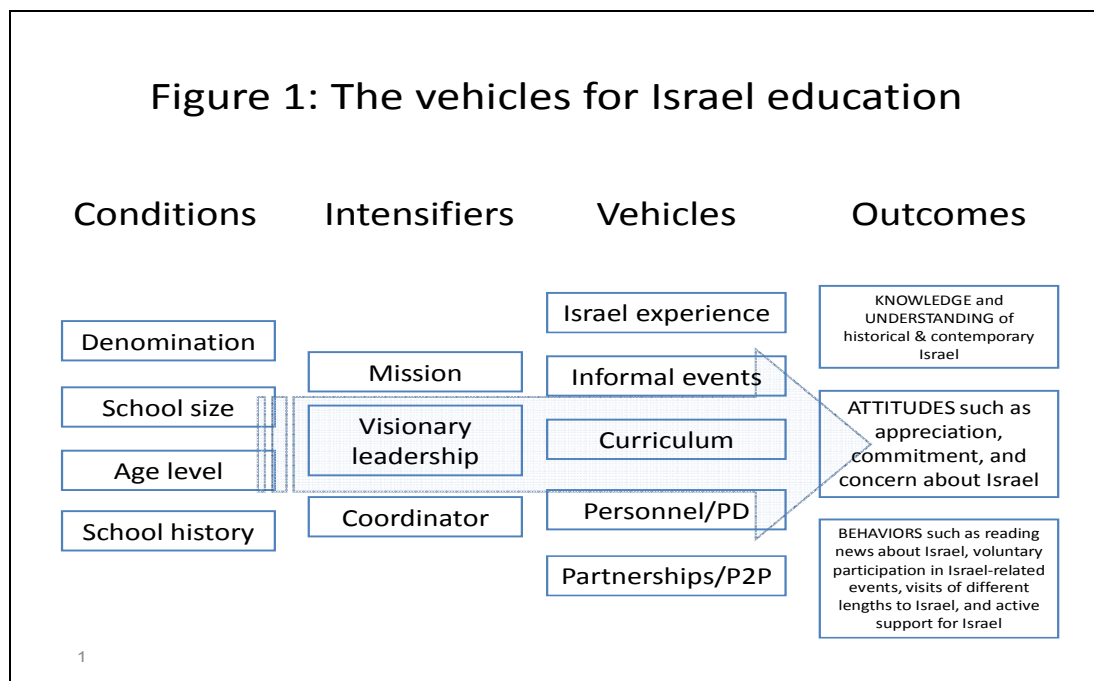
Our analysis of curriculum took place during a period when we were also engaged in a broader AVI CHAI Foundation funded study of Israel education in North American day schools. The AVI CHAI study made use of two primary instruments, a web-based survey of North American day schools, and site visits to a sample of schools identified as exemplars in the field. In each instance, we were able to introduce a focus on the use and design of curriculum into our research and thereby add to the contextual depth of our curriculum investigation. The survey was distributed to all North American day schools identified as Reform, Conservative, Community or Modern-Orthodox, and produced a response rate of 47%, constituting a group of 143 schools whose general composition more or less reflected the make-up of the originally identified research sample. The site visits were conducted at a sample of 15 schools identified by conducting telephone interviews with more than thirty individuals deeply familiar with the field of Israel education – connoisseurs, as the research literature calls them. The schools came from all denominations and regions of North America, and were of different grade levels and sizes. Each of the schools was visited by a research-team member whose site reports provide a rich account of the schools' goals for Israel education, the practices in which they engage, and what the schools perceive to be their successes and challenges.

The combined findings of these various research activities make possible for the first time an account of the school context in which curriculum is used to teach about Israel, how its relative impact is perceived, and what its educational, philosophical and pedagogical features are. These phenomena are described in the next sections.

3. The context

i) A relatively weak vehicle for Israel education

Our analysis of survey data and of site visit reports reveals that when it comes to Israel education, curriculum constitutes just one of a number of primary educational vehicles that schools employ. (These vehicles are described more fully in Appendix 2. They include: in addition to curriculum, an Israel experience/trip; ongoing partnerships with Israeli schools; employing Israeli personnel - usually shlichim – on short term contracts; and extra-curricular events and ceremonies. The relationships between these vehicles and their role in the day school are shown in Figure 1.)



In some instances, the vehicles for Israel education are employed in well-coordinated and thoughtfully conceived fashion. Unfortunately, more often than not, the work that schools do in the field of Israel education is confused by a lack of clear educational purpose and by a bombardment of initiatives that purport to connect young people to the State of Israel. Schools' efforts are undermined by poorly coordinated and fragmented practices, and their work is distorted by an over-reliance on informal educational experiences that are often sub-contracted to external providers whose

practices, no matter how sophisticated, are often poorly synchronized with schools' ongoing work.

A vivid sense of the context in which curriculum is deployed is provided by the answers school-leaders offered to an open-ended survey question that asked, "Of all the programs in your school, which in your view has the greatest impact on students' connection to Israel?" As seen in Table 1, the great majority of respondents point to programs and interventions that occur outside the classroom. They identify instead special calendar-events and ceremonies, relationships with Israelis working in their schools or in partner communities, and, of course, they draw attention to their programs in Israel. Other than at the lowest grade levels where schools do not provide trips to Israel, Israel education is perceived to have its greatest power when conveyed by the vehicles of informal or experiential education.

Table 1. "Of all the programs in your school, which in your view has the greatest impact on students' connection to Israel?"

	Israel experience	Personnel	Curriculum	Informal events	Partnerships	All combined
Orthodox	13%	21%	17%	37%	6%	6%
Liberal	36%	13%	19%	20%	11%	1%
K-6	5%	20%	30%	25%	15%	5%
K-8	31%	16%	17%	23%	10%	2%
K-12/9-12	31%	13%	15%	30%	8%	3%

In a later section we will elaborate on why the work of Israel education in schools is so heavily skewed towards an informal and experiential orientation, and why and how this imbalance is reproduced within the approach taken by much of the externally produced curriculum that schools use. For the moment, it is worth underlining that the schools' assessment of the relatively weak impact of curriculum does not reflect a lack of time or effort devoted to teaching about Israel in the classroom. On the contrary, nearly 60% of schools say that they devote a required course specifically to teaching about Israel (the remainder, we suspect, integrate teaching about Israel into other subject areas such as Bible, Social Studies or Hebrew). More than 80% indicate

that they develop their own curriculum to teach about Israel in the classroom. If curriculum is seen to have relatively limited impact, it is not from lack of investment, but more likely because it does not serve the primary goals for Israel education of most day schools which, as we found from our site visits to schools, are concerned less with teaching for understanding and more with cultivating what many schools vaguely refer to as "a love of Israel", a positive feeling or attitude about the Jewish state that is hard to cultivate within the walls of the classroom.

ii) Located in early grades Hebrew classroom

The only exception to this pattern is in the response in Table 1 from K-6 school-leaders, the only sub-sector that identified curriculum as having more impact than other vehicles. At first glance, this response seems counter-intuitive; in terms of general educational orientation, the elementary grades tend to be much more experiential in orientation than high-school grades. However, when one looks at the examples that schools provide of what curriculum has such impact, it turns out that they have a highly circumscribed notion of curriculum in mind. Almost uniformly, the examples that respondents provide come from their Hebrew programs. It seems therefore that, according to heads of school, these programs, although geared towards teaching a second-language, connect the youngest day school students more powerfully to Israel than anything else they do. In the youngest grades, these programs consume a great deal of students' time. They're richly resourced, and they provide students with an empowering sense of learning a second language. For these reasons, they are often a school highlight for younger children. What we had not previously suspected was that in the elementary school sector, whether inside or outside the classroom, this is where Israel education is most palpably encountered.

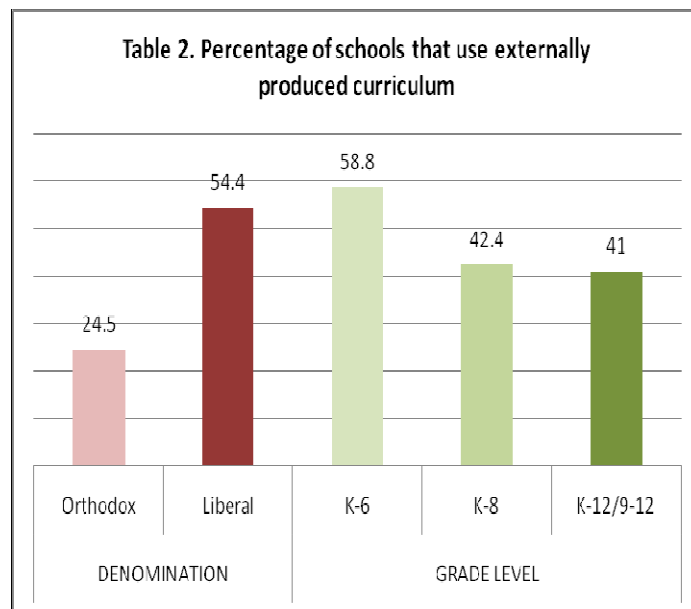
In a later section, when we analyze the content of these Hebrew programs and the view of Israel they communicate, we will elaborate on why this phenomenon is so problematic. But even before venturing an assessment of program content, we suggest that there is cause for concern. In the liberal day school sector (including Community, Conservative and Reform schools), a third of students leave the day school system by the end of Grade 6, and two-thirds by the end of Grade 8. Much of what these

children learn about Israel occurs, then, in a second language and at a pediatric level. Furthermore, because Hebrew language faculty are notoriously disconnected from most of their colleagues, there is reason to suspect that what children learn about Israel in the Hebrew curriculum has a limited connection to other parts of the school curriculum.

iii) Low take-up

The concentration of classroom-based Israel education in the lower school Hebrew classroom is further evidenced by responses from school-leaders about whether they make use of externally produced curriculum in their schools. A majority (more than 70%) of English language curriculum material for teaching about Israel [at least that sample of it that we collected] is directed at the high school grades. And yet, as seen in Table 2, take-up of such curriculum in these grades is disappointingly low, particularly given how much of a variety of curriculum material exists. By comparison, there is heightened interest in externally produced curriculum in the lowest grades of schools, where, we presume, school leaders find it worthwhile to purchase Hebrew programs.

In higher grades it is likely that demand for curriculum material – whatever its quality – is suppressed by the lack of a well-defined subject area or disciplinary context for learning about Israel in the classroom. We saw some indication of this phenomenon when, as part of our qualitative research,



we visited six schools with high school programs that have a reputation for exemplary practice: even in these schools, where there are generally coherent approaches to Israel education, and where the vehicles of Israel education are reasonably well

coordinated, Israel has no obvious curriculum focus; it is as likely to be allocated to the Jewish studies classroom, the history or social studies classroom, as to some other stand-alone slot. Without an obvious classroom home, compelling curriculum materials struggle to attract interest other than from the most devoted educators.

iv) Summary

Although a great deal of material for teaching about Israel has been created for the day school - perhaps more than for any other Jewish component of the day school curriculum, including even Bible and prayer – school-leaders generally regard curriculum to have relatively limited impact on children's connection to Israel. Barely a majority of schools report making use of externally produced curriculum, and in many of the cases where they do, their interest is focused on the lower grades of school where the Hebrew language program serves as the primary vehicle for teaching about Israel in the classroom.

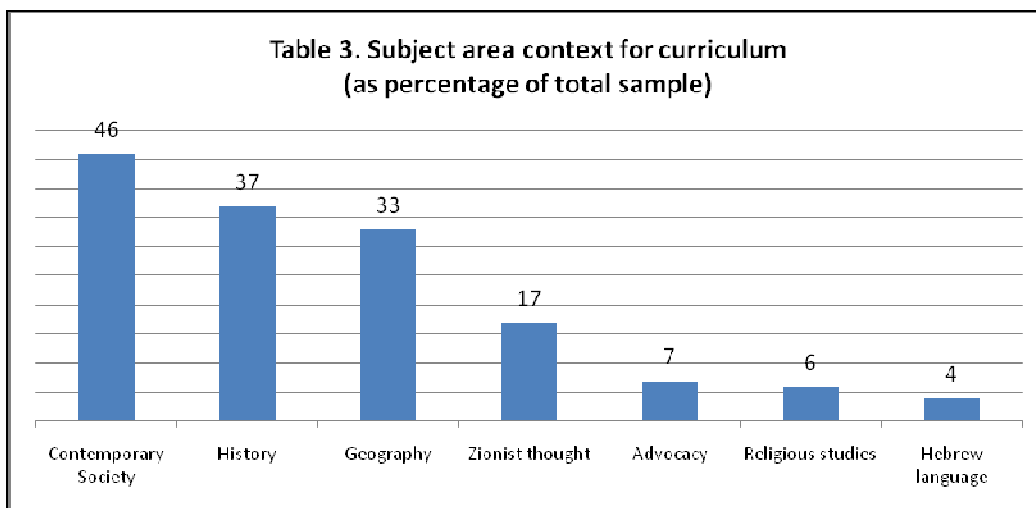
4. The main characteristics of publicly available curriculum

If this is the context in which curriculum is used, what of its content? The curriculum samples we collected were analyzed in relation to three broad dimensions that capture their content focus, pedagogical style and philosophical orientation. Together, these dimensions make possible some broad generalizations about the subject-matter emphases, educational quality and desired learning outcomes of material for teaching about Israel in North American day schools today.

i) Content focus

The first question teachers ask themselves when determining whether or not to adopt curriculum is "where might I teach this?", in other words, in what subject area or discipline might this be inserted. As indicated above, if a program has no obvious subject-area setting on the timetable, it will likely be rejected as an indulgence, no matter how engaging.

The lack of self-evident timetable context is a major obstacle to the adoption of curriculum for teaching about Israel. This problem is reflected in the diffuse set of subject foci to which curriculum is devoted. "Contemporary Society", the most common focus for Israel curriculum (as seen in Table 3), does not fit any of the conventional subject-area categories that schools typically use. As a result, only those unusual schools that possess a pre-existing interdisciplinary timetable slot devoted to something they call "Israel studies" can readily integrate such material; the schools that don't are unlikely to create a new slot within the already compressed day school schedule. The next most frequent subject foci, "history" and "geography", do have more obvious curriculum contexts within the social studies program, but the difficulty created in this instance – and as we have witnessed in a number of schools – is that because of the historical frame used for curriculum design, students' understanding of Israel is truncated, coming to a halt with the events of 1948 or at best 1967; their knowledge lacks a contemporary or current dimension. One last feature of the subject area context for Israel curriculum is worth noting: how little of it is anchored in the context of the Jewish studies curriculum (about 20%, we suspect, if one accounts for some overlap between "Zionist thought" and "religious studies"). Given the time-pressure in schools we find it surprising that curriculum developers have generally avoided creating curriculum that might be anchored within the concerns of the Jewish studies curriculum, say in relation to traditional Jewish texts or more recent Jewish religious literature.



ii) Pedagogic style

The next question teachers likely ask themselves when reviewing curriculum developed by external providers is whether they can make the material work in their classroom, whether, for example, it sufficiently challenges students, involves them actively in their learning and allows for sufficient learner independence. To assess these features, we adapted a set of analytical categories from Ben-Peretz et al's "Curriculum Item Repertory" (CIR) instrument, a framework that views curriculum along a number of dimensions that, collectively, provide a sense of pedagogic style and emphasis. These distinctions are not intended to determine whether curriculum is more or less effective but rather seek to make explicit different pedagogical approaches, all of which have an appropriate time and place in the classroom. A summary of findings from all of the seventy publicly available curriculum we analyzed is found in Table 4.

Table 4. Publicly available curriculum measured in relation to the CIR, and rated on a scale of 1-5.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Concrete thinking required of students	30%		46%	24%		Abstract thinking required of students
Students are passively involved	20%		21%	59%		Pupils are actively involved
Low level of difficulty	33%		53%	14%		High level of difficulty
Students always guided in their learning	57%		29%	14%		Students encouraged towards independent learning
No room for student creativity	40%		34%	26%		Room for student creativity
Focus on recall	19%		34%	47%		Focus on comprehension

The meaning of these distinctions is best appreciated by comparing a couple of curricular examples, one of which rates low, the other high, in terms of the CIR:

Ami Bouganim's Sites and Sources: The Book of Israel, published by the Jewish Agency for Israel², is a thorough history and geography text book exploring important

² Catalogue item #61

sites across the Land of Israel. It approaches each site in largely historical fashion, devoting little space to exploring modern day issues that may surround the site in contemporary Israeli society. Thus when providing an account of the kibbutz movement in a section on the Galil region, little room is given to the evaluation of the kibbutz movement with the hindsight of its modern day near-collapse. Rather, the kibbutz is presented as its own pioneers would have viewed it some 50-80 years ago.

There are a variety of reasons why the curriculum scores low on the CIR. It presents great quantities of information, including supplementary texts, and asks the student to absorb a great body of information concerning geographic sites. While educators may use the text creatively and experientially, the curriculum itself makes no suggestions on how to do this, leaving one to assume that students are passively guided through the information the teacher presents, with little room for their own creativity. Again, since the focus of this curriculum is on historical and geographical content made up mainly of dry facts rather than abstract ideas, and because no suggestions for student assessment are given, one is left to assume that student assessment will concentrate on the recall of information rather than the comprehension of ideas and concepts.

A quite different pedagogy is assumed in Matt Plenn's Herzl: Up Close and Personal - in Pursuit of the Zionist Vision, published by the Department of Zionist Activities, World Zionist Organization³. This curriculum – one that scores high on the CIR - encourages students to be creatively engaged in abstract ideas and concepts; comprehension of these ideas rather than the recall of information is of paramount importance. For example, in the unit "Translating Zionist Visions into Reality", debates within the early Zionist movement between various Zionist ideologies (Political, Practical and Cultural) are evaluated, and are paralleled to a series of inquiries concerning how contemporary Jewish communities and today's Zionist movement should set priorities and allocate resources in an effort to realize their vision. The unit provides students with an experience of strategic decision-making, and explores how ideologies and values are translated into reality through the simulation of an Allocations Committee meeting in which Zionist priorities are debated and determined, and the relevance of the discussed strategies to the contemporary Zionist world evaluated. Ultimately, learning is not assessed through the recall of facts but through the students' capacity to consider and comprehend abstract concepts and to be actively involved in independent and creative thought.

It is noteworthy – as Table 4 confirms - that in general terms most publicly available curriculum displays a generally balanced if somewhat bland pedagogical style. While students are not generally encouraged to be independent or creative learners, and are called to participate in concrete and not especially difficult tasks, they are provided with opportunities to be actively involved in the classroom and do more than merely recall facts.

³ Catalogue item #21

A similar mix of solid but not especially progressive educational practice can be observed in the kind of guidance and support that teachers receive from curriculum writers. The great majority of programs (more than 70%) provide teachers with clear strategies for teaching, for adapting content material to the classroom or at least for alternatives from which to choose, rather than leaving them to come up with their own strategies. At the same time, two-thirds of programs do not simply set out a sequential hierarchy of topics and learning experiences but are unstructured or modular, allowing for flexible use and different modes of sequencing. Few curriculum, however, offer strategies or insights into how teachers might provide for student differentiation by ability. One might say that, as a whole, the programs do not seem designed to exclude teacher input (or to be, what some might call, teacher-proof), but at the same time they don't generally allow much room for teacher individuality or personality.

iii) Pedagogic orientations

The different dimensions of pedagogic style described above cluster within what we identify as four broad and distinct pedagogic orientations: a *traditional* orientation (concerned with the transmission of subject content), an *experiential* orientation (focused on making meaning, relevant to the present moment and the student's life), a *behavioral* orientation (concerned with developing skills irrespective of the particular content employed), and a *cognitive* orientation (focused on the comprehension of abstract concepts). Usually, one orientation or another denominates the curriculum approach taken, although in some instances a curriculum displays more than just one orientation.

In order to clarify what these analytical distinctions can mean in practice we might imagine how different would be the approach taken within each orientation to teaching the same piece of historical content, say, the Israeli Declaration of Independence. We expect that curriculum employing a *Traditional* orientation would want students to know what is in the text and what was the historical background to its declaration. Curriculum employing an *Experiential* orientation would ask students to evaluate the Declaration in light of their knowledge of Zionist history since 1948,

and to consider if it is still relevant in present times. Curriculum with a *Behavioral* orientation would teach the text in the original Hebrew, improving the students' Hebrew language skills (in sophisticated fashion) but without necessarily making sure that they grasped historical details or context. Finally, curriculum employing a *Cognitive* orientation would analyze the abstract concepts in or implied by the text, such as democracy, citizenship, or sovereignty, and compare the application of these concepts in other revolutionary declarations.

Overall we found that 67% of Israel curriculum employed a *Traditional* orientation; 43% an *Experiential* orientation; 23% a *Cognitive* orientation; and 7% a *Behavioral* orientation (usually as Hebrew language curriculum). This balance of orientations is consistent with the breakdown of features identified through use of the CIR where we found a tendency towards concrete thinking (a characteristic of the *Traditional* orientation) and also to active student involvement (typical of a more *Experiential* orientation). This breakdown is also consistent with what we observed earlier concerning the experiential orientation of day school Israel education more generally: that there is tendency towards making sure that students know facts and have positive Israel (related) experiences, but less concern that they generate questions of their own or develop advanced forms of understanding about Israel.

iv) Philosophical orientations

These patterns are further reinforced when we analyze one last dimension of Israel curriculum. In our experience this is a dimension that many teachers consider last, if at all, when determining whether or not to adopt programs, but, we suggest, it is probably what they should consider first, since it relates to the ideological and educational outcomes they seek to achieve.

Taking up the work of our Melton Centre colleague Alick Isaacs, we suggest that, fundamentally, there are six theoretical frameworks or philosophies of Israel education that (knowingly and sometimes unknowingly) shape the design of curriculum for teaching about Israel. Briefly described, the models are as follows:

1. The Classical Zionist Model in which the State of Israel is understood as the culmination of Jewish History and the solution to the Jewish problem (as seen in: *For the Sake of Zion: Pride and Strength through Knowledge – An Educators Guide*⁴).
2. The Israel Engagement Model in which the State of Israel is understood as an object of identity with the Jewish people (as seen in: *One Heart Two Homes: Israel and the Sacred Identity of American Jews*⁵).
3. The Jewish Peoplehood Model in which the State of Israel is a stimulus to broader based notions of Jewish national responsibility (as seen in: *Connecting to Community: Jewish Peoplehood – Belonging and Commitment*⁶).
4. Romantic/Realist Model in which the tension between the ideologies and the realities of Zionism are explored with ideological and ironic awareness (as seen in: *Artzeinu: An Israel Encounter*⁷).
5. The Classical Jewish Text Model in which the State of Israel is understood as a contemporary realization of a classical Jewish context whose enduring meaning and function expands beyond the boundaries of the State's history, future and borders (as seen in: *Reflections on Jerusalem: City of David in Classical Texts*⁸).
6. The Visionary Model in which the State of Israel is the primary arena in the Jewish world today that raises pressing questions that motivate the contemporary challenge of (re)interpreting the Jewish tradition (not seen in any publicly available curriculum).

In addition, our study of curricula materials suggest that there may be two further "philosophies" of Israel education, where educational means may have become ends in themselves. These are

7. The Israel Advocacy Model in which students are prepared to become advocates for Israel in the wider community, normally with a focus on becoming Israel activists on the college campus (as seen in: *IKAR – Israel Knowledge, Advocacy and Responsibility: A Program for High School Students*⁹).
8. The Hebrew Language Model in which many areas of content, such as Jewish culture and religion, and in our case Israel education, are explored within a Hebrew language curriculum. The Israel education component of these curricula is often small, but from our research it has become apparent that

⁴ Catalogue item #18

⁵ Catalogue item #55

⁶ Catalogue item #9

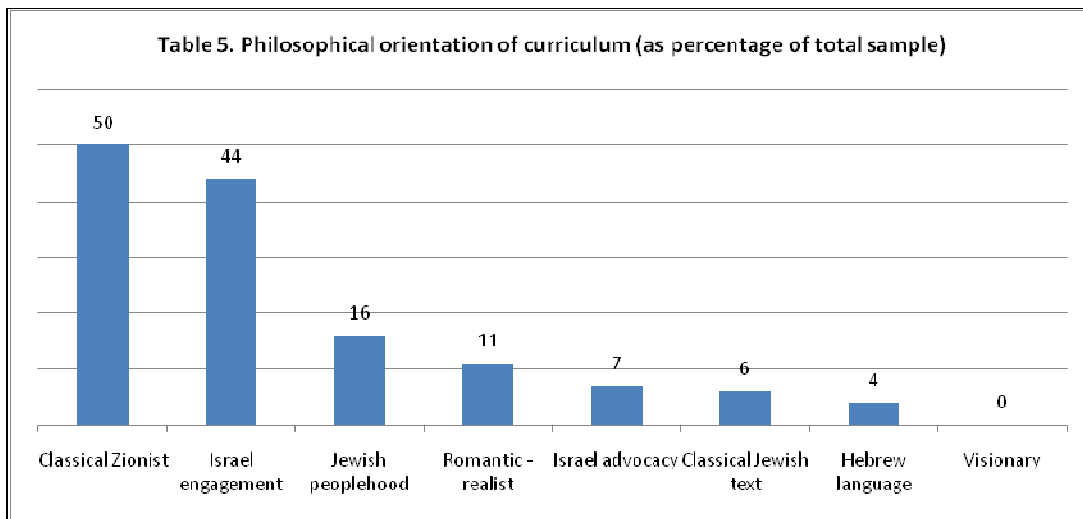
⁷ Catalogue item #3

⁸ Catalogue item #58

⁹ Catalogue item #25

some schools describe their main efforts at Israel Education through these Hebrew language programs (as seen in *TalAm*¹⁰).

Even after taking in to account that some curriculum may be shaped by more than one philosophical orientation, it is clear from Table 5 that the overwhelming majority of programs are driven by one of two particular objectives. These orientations – the *Classical Zionist* and *Israel engagement* - have driven Israel education since the creation of the Jewish state, the former animating the work of fund-raising drives and of aliyah shlichim; the latter becoming more prominent with a developing appreciation that Israel education and Israel experiences (Birthright being the most obvious) have potential to transform the Jewish identities of participants even if they or their assets don't make it to Israel.



It is not surprising that a higher proportion of curriculum produced before the year 2000 were of the *classical Zionist* orientation, while after that year the *Israel engagement* and *Jewish peoplehood* models have appeared more frequently. This change in emphasis reflects a fundamental shift in the way in which Israel's relationship to the Diaspora has been conceived both by Israelis and by Diaspora Jews: Israel education no longer seeks to demonstrate the exceptionalism of the State of Israel but rather aims to relate to Israel in ways that strengthen an argument for being Jewish wherever one is in the world. This tendency is reflected also in what we

¹⁰ Catalogue item #64

found to be a close overlap between *Israel engagement* curriculum and those with a *Jewish peoplehood* orientation. These last two orientations often seem to shape the same materials.

Another relatively recent change in the emphases of Israel education is seen in the emergence of the *Israel advocacy* model. Curriculum conceived with the explicit goal of preparing students to make the case for Israel in the world outside the school (and especially in universities) have only been produced in the most recent years. Evidently, curriculum writers (and their consumers) have been sensitive to sociological developments within the Jewish community and geopolitical developments in the world beyond, as they seek to prepare day school graduates to argue Israel's case, and, we suspect, convince the students themselves of Israel's merits. As we will argue below the emergence of Israel advocacy curriculum betrays some anxiety about how deep is the commitment of day school students to Israel. Certainly, this anxiety is reflected in the comparative rareness of curriculum grounded in a *Romantic/realist* orientation, an approach prepared to acknowledge the challenging (put potentially inspiring) gap between the Zionist dream and current Israeli reality. It may also be reflected in a pedagogical tendency we previously noted to guide students in their learning rather than encourage the kind of independent study in which students raise their own questions and reach their own conclusions about Israel. It seems that, in both its form and content, curriculum reflects an anxiety that students will arrive at the "wrong" conclusions about Israel.

v) *Summary*

Despite wide variety in content, pedagogy and philosophy, the characteristics of publicly available curriculum for teaching about Israel can be summarized as follows: Directed first and foremost to the high school classroom, and anchored most commonly in the concerns of the social studies curriculum – but frequently without an obvious disciplinary home – curriculum for teaching about Israel tends to be geared towards the transmission of concrete knowledge about Israel and to convincing students of Israel's significance for their own personal lives; it is concerned less with enabling students to generate questions of their own or with developing advanced

forms of understanding about the State of Israel. Ultimately, Israel curriculum – through methodologies that tend to be blandly prescriptive rather than open-ended, and experiential rather than intellectual - communicates a notion either that Israel promises a solution to the problem of being Jewish in the modern world or that Israel presents an opportunity (even a reason) for connecting with one's own Jewish identity in the Diaspora.

5. Special cases

i) Hebrew curriculum

Ironically, the most widely utilized curriculum programs for teaching about Israel in day schools were not conceived first and foremost as "Israel curriculum" but as something else: curriculum for teaching Hebrew language. A small number of programs (Tal Am, Neta, Chalav U'dvash, Nitzanim and Chaverim B'Ivrit) – the products of hundreds and thousands of dollars of investment - have made it in to almost every non-Haredi day school in North America, a level of take-up that no "Israel curriculum" can match. Whatever one makes of the effectiveness of these materials as language programs (and such questions are often confused with questions about the aptitude of, and support for, those who teach Hebrew), their contribution to teaching and learning about Israel needs consideration.

In contextual terms, the hours devoted to teaching Hebrew in schools make Israel-related matters symbolically and practically central to children's experience of Jewish schooling. The Hebrew taught in these programs, in contrast to the programs in most supplementary/religious schools, is recognizably the language of modern Israel and not of the Bible or the synagogue. The characters, places and moments-in-time that populate these texts are drawn from a country that is recognizably and often distinctively Israel. These programs therefore place some aspects of modern Israeli culture at the heart of the day school.

In pedagogic terms, the programs are engaging, developmentally well-conceived, and richly resourced. At the middle and high school levels especially, the NETA program¹¹ has raised the bar to unprecedented levels in its use of "cool" and authentic Israeli content and its application of interesting pedagogies. If anything, programs like NETA and TalAm¹² are so well provisioned that teachers report feeling overwhelmed or suffocated by their options. We take all of this to be an improvement on the situation even ten years ago when Hebrew language curriculum was colorless and uninteresting compared to much else that was taught in school.

Ultimately, for our purposes, the question is what view of Israel do these programs convey. What do we make of them as Israel curriculum?

At the elementary level, unfortunately, and perhaps necessarily given the basic levels of language involved, it is an Israel that is simplified and idealized. On the one hand it is a country not much different from the foreign countries encountered in Spanish- or French-as-a-second-language programs where children learn to make friends, go shopping and play sports in a foreign tongue. On the other hand, beyond the generalities of life in a Mediterranean climate and culture, these programs convey what we previously characterized as a classical Zionist message: they depict a society that is organized peculiarly around the Jewish calendar and the memorial days for events in Israel's recent past; it is possessed both of a peculiarly diverse immigrant Jewish population and of unique and ancient historical roots. Implicitly, it is these exceptionalities – those that make Israel different from every other Jewish community in the world - that provide a *raison d'être* for studying Hebrew rather than Spanish or French. But these messages sit in tension with content just as often concerned with the trivialities of modern life in Israel and beyond, and seemingly intended to communicate that Israel is little different from any other technologically advanced country, including the United States.

These confusing messages are reflected in the ways that schools organize the teaching of Hebrew. Some position their Hebrew faculty within a Judaic studies department

¹¹ Catalogue item #53

¹² Catalogue item #64

(where the same teachers will be required to teach both Hebrew and Judaica), some – in high schools especially – within a division for modern languages alongside Spanish, Arabic and Chinese, and in a few cases within an entirely independent department devoted exclusively to Hebrew language and literature. Obviously, in organizational terms, when it comes to Hebrew there is more at stake than just teaching students a modern foreign language with all of the associated (and frequently trumpeted) cognitive benefits in doing so, but its not clear quite what. We are concerned that without clarity of purpose about the role or place of Hebrew in the school, educators will find it hard to justify devoting much more time to teaching about Israel – in English, and at more advanced intellectual levels – when Hebrew already occupies so much of students' classroom time. As a result, we fear that the abiding impression of Israel they pass on to their students is of a peculiarly Jewish Mediterranean vacation destination, the impression typically created by elementary-school Hebrew curriculum.

ii) In-house curriculum

At the outset of our inquiry we had expected to conduct an analysis of at least as many samples of curriculum produced in-house by schools as produced by commercial or not-for-profit publishers. Surveying schools we were encouraged to discover that more than 80% reported that they developed their own materials for teaching about Israel, and more than half of these respondents (59 schools) expressed a readiness to share samples of their work with us.

Once we began to request samples by phone and by email, we discovered a more challenging situation. In one set of instances, what schools sent us was hard to consider as curriculum; it included lists of topics or collections of worksheets but not planned schemes for teaching. More commonly, despite the positive responses of survey respondents (usually heads of schools), those immediately responsible for teaching about Israel were either unable or unwilling to share what they had developed.

Further inquiry revealed various sources for this reluctance: First, so we were told, schools did not want to share curricula in which they had invested time and resources for fear they might be plagiarized by others. Second, despite our best efforts, some of our correspondents did not feel confident enough in their self-developed material to share them for analysis with an academic institution. Third, and more problematically, it seems that many schools are in infringement of copyright laws (they have extensively cannibalized publicly available material) and were therefore reluctant to allow their curricula to infiltrate the public domain. Finally, and most problematically, we discovered that a number of respondents were reluctant to admit that they were not developing their own curricula, but in fact were only using commercially produced curricula.

Taken together, it suggests the need for caution in considering the robustness of school-developed curriculum, no matter how positively one might view the phenomenon of schools – teachers, really - writing their own materials. At the present time, this in-house material is, we suspect, of variable quality, although in the final section of our report we discuss the merits of working with schools so as to develop their capacity in this regard.

Fortunately, the twenty-seven samples we were able to collect are sufficiently diverse in composition and origin to allow some general observations about the ways in which school-developed materials differ from those produced by outsider writers, although we recognize that this sample comes from a self-selecting sub-group ready and able to make public what most preferred to keep to themselves.

Although we had expected school-designed materials to be much more student centered and pedagogically progressive – written as they are by those closest to the classroom – we discovered that none of the in-house curriculum in our sample encourage independent student learning and most do not encourage active learning or student creativity. They are focused on the recall of facts rather than the comprehension of ideas. Strikingly, just 3 out of 27 samples display what we previously called an *experiential* orientation (focused on meaning-making and student

relevance) whereas 24 out of 27 are *traditional* in orientation (concerned with the transmission of subject content). As such, these samples are unmistakably the product of "formal"/classroom educators, unlike those materials produced outside schools whose authors seem often to have been drafted from fields of informal Israel education and Israel experience to write for schools. (It should be noted also that hardly any in-house materials come with guidance for lesson planning or teaching strategy, presumably because their authors have not expected to share them with colleagues and certainly not with educators from other schools.)

In our sample, a disproportionate portion (12 out of 27) of in-house materials are concerned with teaching Hebrew language, a characteristic that may be a freak byproduct of the material we happened to collect or that may indeed reflect some of the patterns on which we have previously commented. In similar fashion, our sample includes a higher proportion of materials with a religious studies/Jewish text focus than in the public sample (25% rather than 6%). This too may be a function of the particular schools that provided us with samples, but it may also be – as we are inclined to suspect – that publicly available curriculum, as previously observed, were not generally developed with Orthodox day schools in mind. As the main consumers of this kind of curriculum, Orthodox schools have therefore been more likely to rely on the material they produce for themselves.

6. Discussions and debates

These findings, some positive, some less so, provoke a series of important questions about how the teaching of Israel in schools can best be served by the development and delivery of Israel curriculum. In fact, it may be that the currently unresolved nature of these questions accounts in turn for many of the problems we have observed. Taking a position on these issues, we suggest, will help move the field forward no matter how counter-intuitive the answers proposed.

i) Integrated or stand-alone?

It is widely assumed that student *learning* is more powerful when integrated across the curriculum than when confined to specific subject areas or disciplines. The concept of "force", for example, takes on greater meaning when explored in both the physical sciences and the humanities. The same – it is said – goes for Israel. If encountered across the curriculum – in social studies, Hebrew language, and Jewish studies – it will take on different meaning and significance for students than when identified as just one more subject on the timetable.

Our study of the school context for Israel curriculum suggests a more pragmatic perspective. Learning may be more powerful when integrated across the curriculum, but when an idea, topic or skill has no obvious subject-area setting on the timetable, it will likely not be taught, let alone learned. We have seen that without an obvious classroom home, compelling curriculum materials struggle to attract interest from educators. We expect that *there will be greater take-up of curriculum if programs target the disciplinary categories that structure schools; most prominently, history, geography and Jewish studies.*

ii) In-house or take-away?

It is widely assumed that *teaching* is more powerful when teachers employ materials they have developed themselves rather than when using those created by an author at a remove from their classroom, and assigned by a supervisor. When teachers are responsible for their own curriculum, it is said, they teach with both greater commitment and greater understanding.

Our study of curriculum-content highlights, however, a great gap between the educational sophistication of curriculum designed in-house and that produced by outside writers. Teachers may be more highly committed to their own materials but the potential for learning from those materials is severely constrained when they don't enough stimulate children's learning. In the short-term, at least, we suspect that *students will be better served if teachers had opportunities to learn how to make*

better use of publicly available curriculum than if they had more opportunities to write their own.

iii) How best to prepare Israel advocates?

It is widely assumed today that those who can make the strongest case for Israel in the larger community are those who have been *trained* to do so. It is said that without such *training* (without learning their lines, as it were) young Jews won't know how to stand up for Israel. We have noticed how Israel curriculum has increasingly become constrained by this kind of advocacy/training mentality. This is seen not only in the recent emergence of advocacy curriculum but also in the relative lack of curriculum that take what we call a Romantic/realistic orientation, and in the limited opportunities provided by curriculum of whatever orientation for students to pursue their own inquiries, allowing them to reach their own conclusions about the Jewish state.

We suggest a different tack, one that doesn't involve writing new curriculum, but that at least teaches teachers how to use curriculum differently so that there is space for students to wrestle with their own questions and drive their own learning. We expect that students will be more deeply committed to Israel and its advocacy if they arrive at these commitments from out of their own inquiries rather than by following somebody else's script in a foreclosed manner. In these terms, *curriculum should be seen not as a straightjacket, or even a script; it can be a springboard and a starting point*. Learning how to draw out its potential in this way is a craft that needs support from outside agencies.

7. Conclusions and recommended next steps for the field

Our study has been grounded in a conviction that curriculum can make a significant contribution to the work of Israel education in day schools. As we wrote in this report's introduction, curriculum provides the resources for the most basic and commonplace component of the school: what children learn in the classroom.

If Israel curriculum does not yet play this role, it is not because a truly effective Israel curriculum has not yet been written (the perfect curriculum is an illusion; curriculum always needs to be refined to meet changing times and changing needs), it is more likely that the potential latent in much of the curriculum that already exists has not properly been realized. In this final section we point to the obstacles that have prevented such an outcome from being realized and what might be done to overcome these challenges.

1. SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Problem: During the course of our work, we found a great many excellent programs that have not made it either in to wide circulation or into the world's major collections of Israel curriculum. Much of this material does not reach schools, and certainly does not catch the attention of educators.

Proposal: *Day school teachers need access to a virtual clearing-house and/or searchable data-base for Israel curriculum that can make it possible to see not only what material is available, but also for what purposes it can be used. This information can be linked to data and knowledge that flows between schools about how they go about using material and how they adapt it to their own purposes.*

Promise: This research project has created the seeds for such a resource. Our analytical catalogue of publicly available materials can be converted cheaply and readily into a searchable data base, linked to scanned samples and to other sources of knowledge we have started to build about the field of Israel education. During the course of this project the Melton Centre has become a repository for a great quantity

of material that can be made accessible to the wider field with minimal new investment.

2. EXTENDING CURRICULUM POTENTIAL

Problem: The pedagogically conservative character of publicly available curriculum means that subject-matter content of great potential (information and ideas about Israel) have not generally been designed to nurture real understanding in students. Too much curriculum aspires only to make sure that students know more facts about Israel and develop positive feelings for the country. In highly skilled hands, curriculum can have a much more significant impact on the ideas and identities of students.

Proposal: *Focused professional development with teachers can transform their capacity to draw out the great potential in curriculum that is already available for use. Rather than helping teachers write their own curriculum (a flawed project at best), it will be more cost-effective and time-efficient to focus professional development on developing teachers' skills to apply, adapt and develop resources that are already available.*

Promise: Over many years, Melton Centre faculty have developed expertise and infrastructure for working with teachers to develop and design curriculum. It is possible to build on this expertise and on extensive resources for distance and face-to-face education to target what our research has found to be a highly specific need in schools: working with teachers to adapt publicly available curriculum in ways that can transform children's learning. This work – using the core forms of professional development – can involve modeling good practices, analyzing materials together, viewing videos of teaching, and supporting teachers over time to introduce new practices in to their classrooms.

3. CONNECTING HEBREW TO THE REST OF THE FORMAL CURRICULUM

Problem: The concentration of classroom-based Israel education in the Hebrew language classroom in elementary schools produces a skewed image of Israel, which because of the organizational dynamics in schools sets the study of Israel apart from

large parts of school life. Hebrew faculty insufficiently coordinate their work with other classroom teachers in other subject areas.

Proposal: *We propose working with clusters of schools on identifying and developing links across the curriculum to connect what is learned about Israel in Hebrew with what can be learned in other subject areas. A series of school-based experiments can develop models for connecting Hebrew with, say, science and math, or with more obvious points of connection in history, geography and Jewish studies.*

Promise: As we have already indicated in ongoing conversations with Anne Lansky at the I-Center, we think that an initiative that focuses on Hebrew's place in the school can make a profound and completely fresh contribution to Israel education, coming to grips with a problem that has constrained schools for years. Our research shows that examples of good practices linking Hebrew to others area of curriculum do exist in the field, and can, with the appropriate scaffolding, serve as models for others and be scaled up to the field as a whole.

4. CONNECTING CURRICULUM TO ISRAEL EDUCATION ACROSS THE SCHOOL

Problem: Curriculum constitutes just one of the primary educational vehicles that schools use for Israel education. Given the formal educational context, it is ironic that curriculum is often the weakest link in this multidimensional activity when it could serve as the bedrock for all that children learn about and experience of Israel both formally and informally.

Proposal: *We propose to work with cohorts of day school Israel coordinators to develop their capacity to connect the vehicles for Israel education in a more coherent and consistent fashion, and to locate curriculum more centrally to this activity. This will require working with senior level personnel to develop school-based approaches to Israel education that straddle formal and informal education.*

Promise: A model for this work can be found in the Melton Centre's Senior Educators Program where educators of great promise have come to the Hebrew University to work closely with a faculty tutor to design and develop educational initiatives for institutional change. Over the last decades, outstanding educators in the

field of Israel education have graduated this program, including Anne Lansky, David Bryfman, Jay Lieberman, Naava Frank and Claire Goldwater. Bringing together cohorts of educators focused on a shared concern with more effectively connecting the vehicles for Israel education , and especially with building links between formal and informal education, has potential to transform the day school field.

Appendix 1. Israel Curriculum Analysis Model

Title:

General Details

Author:

Date of publication:

Publisher:

Target population:

Curriculum format:

Duration of curriculum:

Number of pages:

Description and contents:

Educational approach:

Concrete thinking required of students	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	Abstract thinking required of students
Pupils are passively involved	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	Pupils are actively involved.
Low level of difficulty	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	High level of difficulty
Pupils are always guided in their learning	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	Pupils are encouraged towards independent learning
No room for student creativity	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	There is room for student creativity
Focus on recall	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	Focus on comprehension

Curriculum approach:

- Classroom management style/teacher role expectation
- Recommended teaching strategies
- Can the curriculum materials be adapted to students of different ability levels?
- Do the curriculum materials provide the teacher with alternatives for choice?
- Content oriented vs. process oriented
- Structured sequential curriculum or unstructured modular curriculum
- Detailed curriculum or general curriculum
- Theoretical perspective:
 - Traditional
 - Experiential
 - Behavioral
 - Cognitive

Israel Education Orientation:

- The Classical Zionist model
- The Israel Engagement Model
- The Jewish Peoplehood Model
- Romantic/Realist Model
- The Classical Jewish Text Model
- The Visionary Model

Research Notes:

Israel Curriculum Analysis Model – with explanation

Title:

General Details

Author:

Date of publication:

Publisher: (Name and details including ordering information/contact details, as well as a brief description of the publishing body)

Target population: Age/grade and background/school type

Curriculum format: syllabus/text book/hand book/activity sheets/ lesson-plans/resource

bank/teacher guide

Duration of curriculum: In classes/hours/weeks

Number of pages: If a text book/handbook

Description and contents:

A brief description of the format and content of the curriculum, as well as physical appearance/aesthetic attractiveness of materials. This section should include references to various components from Eash's evaluation model (Lewey 1988) and the content evaluation checklist adapted from Bloom's Curriculum Evaluation Checklist, (Bloom 1977):

1. Stated objectives
2. Organization of materials (scope and sequence)
3. Methods of instruction
4. Student assessment format
5. Accuracy and soundness of materials
6. Clarity and meaningfulness
7. Interest values for students
8. Relevance to students' needs and aspirations

Educational approach:

The following criteria rated on a scale of 1-5 (adapted from CIR instrument, Ben-Peretz *et al.* 1982):

Concrete thinking required of students	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Abstract thinking required of students
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Pupils are passively involved	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Pupils are actively involved.
Low level of difficulty	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	High level of difficulty
Pupils are always guided in their learning	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Pupils are encouraged towards independent learning
No room for student creativity	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	There is room for student creativity
Focus on recall	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Focus on comprehension

Curriculum approach:

Short comments on:

- Classroom management style/teacher role expectation (Ben-Peretz 1977, 1990)
- Recommended teaching strategies (Ben-Peretz 1990, Silberstein & Ben-Peretz 1983)
- Can the curriculum materials be adapted to students of different ability levels? (Ben-Peretz 1990)
- Do the curriculum materials provide the teacher with alternatives for choice? (Ben-Peretz 1990)
- Content oriented vs. process oriented (Ben-Peretz & Kremer 1979)
- Structured sequential curriculum – structured character with a sequential hierarchy of topics and learning experiences or unstructured modular curriculum – allows for flexible use, and different modes of sequencing (Ben-Peretz 1990)
- Detailed curriculum – curriculum with guidelines that include detailed suggestions about sequences, time allocations, and instructional strategies or general curriculum – dependant more on teacher's own planning (Ben-Peretz 1990)
- Theoretical perspective: traditional (content focused) vs. experiential (focus on relevance to contemporary time and students' life) vs. behavioral (skills focused) vs. Cognitive (focus on abstract concepts) (Posner 1992)

Israel Education Orientation:

The following six models of Israel curriculum, developed by Isaacs (????), constitute theoretical frameworks or philosophies of Israel education. A curriculum may fall into one or more of these.

9. The Classical Zionist Model in which the State of Israel is understood as the culmination of Jewish History and the solution to the Jewish problem.
10. The Israel Engagement Model in which the State of Israel is understood as an object of identity with the Jewish people.
11. The Jewish Peoplehood Model in which the State of Israel is a stimulus to broader based notions of Jewish national responsibility.
12. Romantic/Realist Model in which the tension between the ideologies and the realities of Zionism are explored with ideological and ironic awareness.
13. The Classical Jewish Text Model in which the State of Israel is understood as a contemporary realization of a classical Jewish context whose enduring meaning and function expands beyond the boundaries of the State's history, future and borders.
14. The Visionary Model in which the State of Israel is the primary arena in the Jewish world today that raises pressing questions that motivate the contemporary challenge of (re)interpreting the Jewish tradition.

Research Notes:

Any further comments of interest or use from the researcher (not curriculum evaluation) including a summary of the curriculum presentation.

Appendix 2. The vehicles of Israel education

Our data analysis reveals that schools make use of five primary vehicles for Israel education. Each involves its own financial and opportunity costs, and produces distinct educational outcomes. The differences between these outcomes have never been explored, nor has the potential that might exist in their careful combination.

Israel experience – A great many opportunities exist for students to spend time in Israel in programs ranging in length from two weeks to three years. The arrangement and focus of these programs vary greatly, from conventional tours of Israel that include some opportunities to meet with Israelis, to programs for living with and attending school with Israelis that also provide opportunities to tour. Many programs offer the option of combining an Israel experience with a visit to Eastern Europe and Holocaust sites.

Informal events – With widely varying differences in expertise and ambition, scale and scope, schools celebrate and memorialize key moments in the history of the State of Israel. They also provide specially programmed events that can occur at almost any time of the day or week to explore, experience and advocate some aspect of contemporary Israel. These programs take place on or off the school's premises, and involve every imaginable mix of young and adult participants.

Curriculum – Formal arrangements and educational materials exist for teaching about Israel in almost every subject area and discipline of the day school curriculum, in Jewish and/or general studies, Hebrew and/or English, at all age levels, and as discrete teaching units and/or integrated into other concerns. The delivery of curriculum is as likely to be mandated as to be a consequence of a teacher's own special interest.

Personnel and professional development – Schools employ Israelis (and/or North Americans with particular commitments and skills) on short-, long-term or permanent contracts so as to provide students with role models and resources that can connect them and the school to Israel. Additionally/alternatively, they provide professional development (locally and/or in Israel) for faculty so as to enhance their understanding, commitment and interest in Israel and/or their capacity to teach about it.

Partnerships and person-to-person relationships – Schools maintain relationships with Israeli schools and organizations to different degrees of intensity and extent. Connected by video, email and letter exchange, by shared internet sites such as Second Life, by visits to one another's schools by individual or small groups of teachers, and by trips taken by large numbers of students in both directions, these relationships can be project-focused, connected to an Israel trip or ongoing throughout a student's day school career.